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ABSTRACT

This publication is a short description of the research milieu at Aalborg University (Denmark) dealing with open learning and new technology, especially project pedagogy and distance education. Two main projects are described: (1) PICNIC (Project in Computer Networks in Distance Education Curricula), a project in the humanities which focuses on the use of computer conferencing in distance education; and (2) TNP (Technology and New Pedagogy in Open Learning), an interdisciplinary project which utilizes a variety of media other than computer conferencing systems and touches on subjects other than the humanities. (GL)

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The university of Aalborg is situated in the northern part of Jutland. It is a new university and is one of the new so-called "university-centres" built in Denmark in the late 60'ies and at the beginning of the 70'ies. These new universities are founded on and have developed the pedagogical approach called project pedagogy, and they have as well stressed on the importance of openness towards the surrounding society.

At the university of Aalborg, Denmark, a well-acting and expanding research environment with open learning and new technologies especially in the light of project pedagogy and distance education has been built up.

At the same time the university administration is involved in creating an open learning project, in which different kinds of educational institutions are working together in order to create an experimental and research project of open learning within advanced education. The aim is to develop and offer for instance work environment courses at different levels (from the unskilled labourer till the employee of an university). New educational technologies (computer conferencing systems) will be used during development of courses as well as during the implementation of the courses.

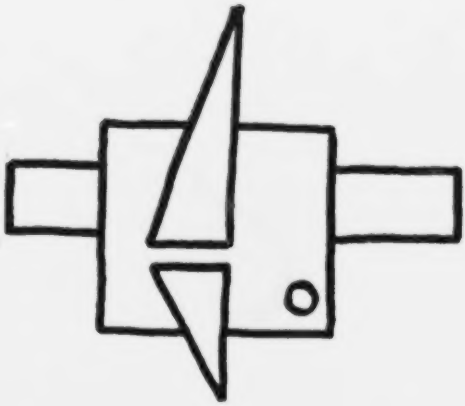
In Denmark the tradition of distance education within the educational system is rather new. Jutland Open University was founded in 1982 as a co-operation between the humanistic faculties of three Danish universities among them also the University of Aalborg. Since then, open university courses within this field have been arranged - but first and foremost within humanistic educations. During the last years other Danish universities have also arranged open university courses - likewise with background in the humanistic faculties.

Today a central political thought with adult education is open learning - especially in the form of distance education. And the

possibilities of the new technology are certain to be utilized in open learning of the future.

In Denmark there has been an explosion of technology in "face-to-face education" during the last 5 years. It has caused a lot of problems mainly due to the facts that the implementation was decided centrally, that the teachers have not been taught the pedagogical use of new technology and that the software has not been good enough. Among the teachers a further polarization of technological optimists and technological pessimists took place.

As researchers we find that our aim is to analyze critically and constructively, primarily from a pedagogical point of view, from governmental thoughts and plans about open learning as well as the use of technology in distance education. There are many ideological and economical interests involved in this, and we find it very important that the use of technology in open learning is founded on research and not only on conjectures. In this way we hope that we can contribute in developing a form of open learning where technology is used to obtain the pedagogical aims. And where much attention is paid to development of new pedagogy as well as to development of technology.



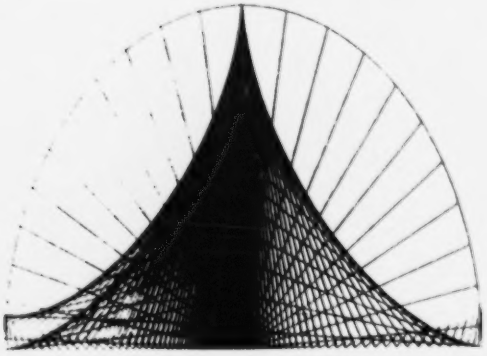
PICNIC

Project in Computer Networks in Distance Education Curricula

Three researchers from the humanistic faculty, with associate professor Annette Lorentsen as project leader, constitute the PICNIC group.

The project is founded by the Danish Research Council for the Humanities and started in January 1988. The duration of the project is scheduled to two years.

The PICNIC project was established in connection with an experiment with computer conferencing systems at Jutland Open University and this experiment is the basis of the empirical studies of PICNIC. The intention of using computer conferencing systems at Jutland Open University is the objective of enhancing the interaction and communication between teachers and students and among the students themselves at Jutland Open University.



The PICNIC project combines approaches from technological evaluation, communication analysis and pedagogical research.

In detail the aims of PICNIC are as follows:

- to investigate the relation between system design, communications and knowledge processes, and the pedagogical organization of teaching and learning within distance education at an advanced level, in order to provide knowledge for future development and use of computer conferencing in distance education
- to investigate the impacts of computer conferencing systems on learning and study processes in order to be able to determine the specific qualitative potential and the limitations of computer conferencing in distance education and in research.
- to provide knowledge and experience for supporting use of computer conferencing in distance education and in education/teaching and research on a large scale.
- to acquire knowledge of development and application of computer conferencing in foreign distance education systems.
- to make knowledge of both foreign and Danish projects on computer conferencing systems and their results available to a wider forum.

PICNIC is continuously publishing its research results in the series PICNIC-NYT. In the series the following have been published in English:

PICNIC - Project in Communication Networks in Distance Education Curricula (Project description in short in English).

Lorentsen, Annette: Presentation and Analysis of "Project Computer Conferencing Systems within Distance Education" - a research projekt at Jutland Open University, the University of Aalborg, 1988.

TNP

Technology & New Pedagogy in Open Learning

TNP is an interdisciplinary research project running for 2 1/2 years. It includes collaborators from all 3 main fields of the University Centre of Aalborg (AUC) - i.e. collaborators from the humanities, the social scientific and the technical scientific main fields. Project leader is associate professor Ms Annette Lorentsen.

The participants of PICNIC will form a part of the TNP, which by this becomes both a continuation of the research activities which have been started in PICNIC and an extension of these activities. The TNP will approach other medias than the computer conferencing systems and will approach other main fields than the humanities, which have been the empirical field of PICNIC.

The TNP is built up in opposition to faculties and interdisciplinaries.

The TNP research-group is aiming at studying some transverse

ways of presenting the problems:

- The term "open education" including its relation to distance education and new technology.

- Open education and distance education seen in an educational and educational sociological relation.

- Project pedagogy - especially the changed conditions for the learning processes by the use of the new communication technologies and the changed conditions of basing distance education on a project pedagogical concept.

- Communicative competence as an integrated and necessary part of the pedagogical processes and as an independent problem field in connection to the new communication technologies.

- Didactics of the science of engineering, of society and foreign languages in relation to distance education and new technology in distance education.

It is our intention that the project workers shall start from and concentrate on various ways of presenting the problems. But, it is a central perspective to build up a common theoretical definition. Profound studies of the terms "open education" and "distance education" are very essential. Furthermore, we will develop common terms and models as an evaluation of pedagogical technology used in distance education.

TNP will continuously publish its results in the series TNP-SERIEN.

The project description in short is available in English:
Lorentsen, Annette (et al): Technology & New Pedagogy in Open Learning, Project description. The TNP-series No. 1, The University of Aalborg 1989.

The participants of PICNIC are as follows:
Associate professor Ms Annette Lorentsen (project leader)
Assistant professor Ms Lone Dirckinck-Holmfeld
Research collaborator Ms Bodil Brander Christensen

The participants of the TNP-project are as follows:
Associate professor Ms Annette Lorentsen (project leader)
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Associate professor Mr Palle Rasmussen
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Research collaborator Ms Anette Kolmos
Research collaborator Ms Bodil Brander Christensen

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